



David Irving



Goebbels.
Mastermind of the Third Reich

“David Irving is in the first rank of Britain’s
historical chroniclers”—THE TIMES

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A Note on the Internet Edition. This biography went through half a dozen drafts between the handwritten original and the printed book. The final typescript was completed on September 7, 1994, and submitted to St Martins Press (SMP) that winter. That is the full-length text reproduced here.

After the contract was signed, the biography went through the normal editing processes, being appraised, according to SMP’s editor John Douglas, by seven different editors.

At SMP’s suggestion the earlier chapters were substantially cut back in editing. In February 1996 the “Anti-Defamation League of the B’nai Brith,” a New York based Jewish body, began agitating against SMP and Doubleday Inc., who had announced this work as their History Book Club selection for May 1996. The publishers initially announced that they would not surrender to the ADL intimidation, but on April 6, 1996 they did just that. The book never appeared in the United States. [For more detail: <http://www.fpp.co.uk/StMartinsPress/SMPIndex.html>].

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IN MEMORY OF
MICHAEL SHEPPARD
WHO CLIMBED TOO FAR

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Acknowledgements

WRITING THIS BIOGRAPHY, I have lived in the evil shadow of Dr Joseph Goebbels for over six years.

Four years into the ordeal, I had the immense good fortune to become the first—and so far only—person to open the complete microfiche record, made by the Nazis in 1944/1945, of Goebbels' entire private diaries and papers from 1923 to 1945; the Red Army had placed these in the secret Soviet state archives in Moscow. There they languished until the ninety or so original Agfa boxes containing the 1,600 glass plates, on which Goebbels had had the diaries filmed for safety, were discovered by the Goebbels Diaries expert Dr Elke Fröhlich in March 1992. (On behalf of all historians of the period I place on record here our gratitude for the work she has done on the diaries.) I was able to use them myself in June and July of the same year, probably the first person to have untied the string on those boxes since 1945. With the support of Dr V P Tarasov, chief of the Russian federation's archives, and Dr V N Bondarev, chief of the former Soviet secret state archives, I was able to retrieve or copy some five hundred pages of the most important missing passages of the diary, including Goebbels' first diary, begun in 1923, the 1933 Reichstag fire, the 1934 Röhm Putsch, the 1938 Kristallnacht, the months before the outbreak of war in 1939 and many other historically significant episodes. The conditions in these archives in Moscow's Viborg street were, it must be said, challenging: Soviet archives were designed for keeping things secret, and the very notion of a public research room was alien to them. This one had no microfilm or microfiche reader. After struggling to read the 1,600 fragile glass microfiches (some 80,000 pages) with a thumbnail-sized 12x magnifier on my first visit, I was able, through the generosity of the London *Sunday Times*, to donate a sophisticated film and fiche reader to the Russians on my second; the bulky machine arrived back in London, without explanation, one day after I did in July 1992.

What followed was a less enlightened episode. I provided extracts from these diaries to Times Newspapers Ltd in Britain. The *Sunday Times* published them along with *Der Spiegel* in Germany and other major newspapers around the world. I also donated complete sets to the German federal archives in Koblenz and to the archives of Goebbels' native city Mönchengladbach. Nevertheless, while the international press celebrated the retrieval of the long-lost diaries many rival historians registered something approaching a cry of pain.

Their injured professional amour propre proved infectious. While spending half a million pounds promoting its serialization of the diaries' scoop, the *Sunday Times* mentioned the name of the person who acquired them in the smallest type-size known to man; *Der Spiegel* printed the series for five weeks without mentioning him at all. A Berlin university historian, whose team has been labouring for years on the other volumes of the diaries, reported at length on the 'new find' to a symposium in the United States, again without reference to either Dr Fröhlich, the discoverer—to whom all real credit is due—or to myself.* The directors of Piper Verlag, Munich, who a few weeks later published an abridged popular edition of the other Goebbels Diaries,† deplored in a German television news bulletin that 'Mr Irving of all people' should have exclusively obtained these sensational missing diaries—and failed to mention either then or in their publication that without reward he had at the last minute made one hundred pages available with which they had filled aching gaps in their publication.

Even more lamentable have been the actions of the German government's federal archives, the Bundesarchiv, to whom I also donated many Goebbels documents including a set of all the diaries I retrieved in Moscow. On the instructions of the

* Dr Jürgen Michael Schulz, of the Berlin Free University, 'Zur Edition der Goebbels Tagebücher,' a paper presented to the German Studies Association conference, 1992. See its *Newsletter*, vol.xvii, No.2, winter 1992, 34ff.

† Dr Ralf Georg Reuth (ed.), *Joseph Goebbels Tagebücher*, five vols. (Munich, Zürich, 1992).

minister of the interior, on July 1, 1993 the archives banished me forever from their halls, without notice, two hours before the conclusion of my seven years of research on this subject. They had earlier provided a hundred photos at my expense—but on the minister's instructions they now also refused to supply caption information for them. When I requested the Transit-Film Corporation, who inherited the copyrights of Third Reich film productions, to provide still photographs of the leading actors and actresses who play a part in the Goebbels story, the firm cautiously inquired of Professor Friedrich Kahlenberg, head of the Bundesarchiv, whether 'special considerations' might apply against helping me! (A copy of their letter fortuitously came into my hands, but not the pictures I had requested.) The background can only be surmised. Professor Kahlenberg had hurried to Moscow in July 1992—too late to prevent the Russians from granting me access to the coveted microfiches of the Goebbels diaries. (There was no reason why the Russians should have denied me access: Several of my books, including those on Arctic naval operations and on Nazi nuclear research, have been published by Soviet printing houses.) The Bundesarchiv has justified its banishment, which is without parallel in any other archives, on the grounds that my research might harm the interests of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ban has prevented me from verifying my colleagues' questionable transcriptions of certain key words in the handwritten diaries. I had a list of twenty such words which I wished to double-check against the original negatives; pleading superior orders, the Bundesarchiv's deputy director, Dr Siegfried Büttner, refused to allow even this brief concluding labour. As one consequence, evidently unforeseen by the German government, the Bundesarchiv has had to return to England its 'Irving Collection,' half a ton of records which I had deposited in its vaults for researchers over the last thirty years. These include originals of Adolf Eichmann's papers, copies of two missing years of Heinrich Himmler's diary, the diaries of Erwin Rommel, Alfred Jodl, Wilhelm Canaris, Walther Hewel, and a host of other papers not available elsewhere.

I HASTEN to add that with this one exception every international archive has accorded

to me the kindness and unrestricted access to which I have become accustomed in thirty years of historical research. I would particularly mention the efforts of Dr David G Marwell, director of the American-controlled Berlin Document Center (BDC), in supplying to me 1,446 pages of biographical documents relating to Goebbels' staff. However these now, like the collections formerly archived in Moscow and in the DDR, also come under the arbitrary ægis of the Bundesarchiv. Marwell's predecessor, the late Richard Bauer, provided me with the BDC's file on Goebbels (my film DI-81).* In the German socialist party's Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Bonn, deputy archivist Dr Ulrich Cartarius generously granted to me privileged access to the original handwritten diary of Viktor Lutze, chief of staff of the S.A. (1934-43), on which he was currently working. Karl Höffkes of Essen kindly let me use the Julius Streicher diary and papers in his private archives.

The Yivo Institute for Jewish Research in New York also allowed me to exploit their fine Record Group 215, which houses a magnificent collection of original files of propaganda ministry documents, including Goebbels' own bound volumes of press clippings. I must also mention my Italian publishers, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, and their senior editor Dr Andrea Cane, who made available to me for transcription Goebbels' entire handwritten 1938 diary—it was a two-year task, but without that 'head start' in reading Goebbels' formidable script I should have been unable to make the sense of the Moscow cache that I did. This is also the proper place to thank my friend and rival Dr Ralf Georg Reuth, author of an earlier Goebbels biography, for unselfishly transferring to me a copy of Horst Wessel's diary and substantial parts of the 1944 Goebbels diary, to which I added from Moscow and other sources.

The attitude of the other German official archives was very different from that of the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. Dr Hölder, president of the German federal statistics

* A listing of the author's relevant microfilmed records is on pp. n of this work. Most can be ordered from Microform Academic Publishers Ltd., Main Street, East Ardsley, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF3 2AT, England (tel. +44 924 825 700; fax 829 212).

agency (Statistisches Bundesamt) in Wiesbaden, provided essential data on Jewish population movements with reference to Berlin. Two staff members (Lamers and Kunert) of the Mönchengladbach archives provided several of the early school photos and snapshots of girlfriends reproduced in this work. André Mieles of the Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde (German Institute of Cinematography) provided many of the original movie stills and other fine photographs of filmstars. I owe thanks to Tadeusz Duda and the Jagiellonski Library of University of Kraków, Poland, for the photographs reproduced from Horst Wessel's diary in their custody. Dr Werner Johe of the Forschungsstelle für die Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus (Research Office for the History of National Socialism) in Hamburg volunteered data from the diary of Gauleiter Albert Krebs. Karl Heinz Roth of the Hamburg Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts (Foundation for the Social History of the Twentieth Century) assisted me in dating certain episodes in 1934. The state archives of Lower Saxony (Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv) in Wolfenbüttel let me read Leopold Gutterer's papers and I am glad to have been able to interview Dr Gutterer, now over ninety, on several occasions for this book. I was fortunate to obtain access to the papers of Eugen Hadamowsky as well as those of Joseph and Magda Goebbels and of the propaganda ministry itself at the Zentrales Staatsarchiv in Potsdam while it was still in the communist zone of Germany; most of the files—e.g., vol. 765, Goebbels' letters to his colleagues at the Front—had remained untouched since last being used by Dr Helmut Heiber in 1958. In those last dramatic days before November 1989, archivist Dr Kessler gave me unlimited access despite cramped circumstances; those files too have now passed under the less liberal control of the Bundesarchiv.

Although any biographer of Goebbels owes a debt to Dr Helmut Heiber, who first trod the paths to the papers in Potsdam, he will forgive me for not using his otherwise excellent published volumes of Goebbels' speeches; often important phrases—faithfully reported by local British and other diplomats in the audiences—were omitted from the published texts on which Heiber relies; these diplomatic records, as well as other important documents, I have extracted from the holdings of the Public Record Office in London, capably helped by Susanna Scott-Gall as a research assist-

ant. Shortly before its completion Manfred Müller, an expert of the early years of the Goebbels family, generously commented on my manuscript and let me read his own biography of Hans Goebbels, the brother of the Reichminister.

The Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) in Munich gave me the run of its library and archives and made available to me its files of press clippings on Nazi personalities. But here too a possessiveness, an unseemly territorialism came into play as the IfZ contrived to protect its virtual monopoly in unpublished fragments of the Goebbels diaries. Before coming across the Moscow cache, I had asked the IfZ, while researching there in 1992, for access to its Goebbels diaries holdings for the two years 1939 and 1944; on May 13 the director of the IfZ refused in writing, stating that it was the institute's strict and invariable practice not to make available 'to outsiders' collections that it was still processing. This was why—since I could not conceive of completing the biography properly without those volumes—I travelled to Moscow, where I had learned that the original Nazi microfiches were housed; here I accessed, to the Munich institute's chagrin, not only the volumes for 1939 and 1944 but the *entire* diaries from 1923 to 1945—but not before the institute, in an attempt to secure my eviction, had urgently faxed to Moscow on July 3, 1992 the allegation, which they many weeks later honourably withdrew†, that I was stealing from the Soviet archives. Foul play indeed—methods of which Dr Goebbels himself would probably have been proud. That was not all. A few days later, hearing that the *Sunday Times* intended to publish the diaries which I had found in Moscow, the same institute, with a haste that would have been commendable under other circumstances, furnished to journalists on the *Daily Mail*, a tabloid English newspaper, the diary material which it had denied to me two months earlier: as of course they were entitled to. There was one pleasing denouement. The tabloid newspaper—which had paid out £20,000 in anticipation of its scoop—found that neither it nor its hired historians could read the minister's notoriously indecipherable handwriting. It abandoned its serialisation in impotent fury two days later.

† *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 22, 1992

Of course this biography is not based on Dr Goebbels' writings alone. In no particular sequence, I must make mention of Andrzej Suchcitz of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London who provided to me important assistance on the provenance of Goebbels' revealing secret speech about the Final Solution of September 1942; the George Arents library at the University of Syracuse, N.Y., who allowed me to research in the Dorothy Thompson papers; and to Geoffrey Wexler, Reference Archivist of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, who gave access to Louis P Lochner's papers, copies of some of which are also housed in the Franklin D Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, N.Y. I also owe thanks to the latter library for the use of other collections including William B Donovan's papers and the 'presidential safe files'; I used more of Donovan's papers at the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle, Pa.

Dr G Arlettaz of the Swiss federal archives in Berne, Dr Sven Welander of the League of Nations archives at the United Nations in Geneva, and Didier Grange of the Geneva city archives provided valuable information and photographs on Goebbels' 'diplomatic' visit to Geneva in 1933. In Germany I was greatly helped by the officials of the Nuremberg state archive which houses reports on the post-war interrogations of leading propaganda ministry and other officials (some of which I also read at the National Archives in Washington D.C., where my friends John Taylor and Robert Wolfe provided the same kindly and expert guidance as they have shown for several decades.)

Dr Howard B Gotlieb, director of the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University drew my attention to their collection of the former Berlin journalist Bella Fromm's papers. Archivist Margaret Petersen and assistant archivist Marilyn B Kann at the Hoover Library at Stanford University, Ca., allowed me to see their precious trove of original Goebbels diaries as well as the political-warfare papers of Daniel Lerner and Fritz Theodor Epstein. The Seeley Mudd Library of Princeton University let me see their precious Adolf Hitler collection, although they were not, alas, permitted to open to me their Allen Dulles papers which contain several files on Goebbels and the July 1944 bomb plot. Bernard R Crystal of the Butler Library of Columbia Univer-

sity, N.Y., found several Goebbels items tucked away in the H R Knickerbocker collection. Dr Jay W Baird, of Miami University, Ohio, volunteered access to his confidential manuscripts on Werner Naumann, whom he had interviewed at length on tape in 1969 and 1970; the manuscripts are currently held at the IfZ, which failed to make them available despite authorisation from Baird. The late Marianne Freifrau von Weizsäcker, mother of the later President Richard von Weizsäcker, provided to me access to her husband's then unpublished diaries and letters (later published by Leonidas Hill). The late Freda Rössler, née Freiin von Fircks, talked to me at length about her murdered husband Karl Hanke, Goebbels' closest colleague, rival in love, and gauleiter of Breslau, and supplied copies of his letters and other materials.

Major Charles E Snyder, USAF (retired), gave me a set of the precious original proofs of the moving Goebbels family photos reproduced in this work; as in *Hitler's War* (London, 1991) some colour photographs are from the unique collection of unpublished portraits taken by Walter Frenz, Hitler's HQ film cameraman, to whom my thanks for entrusting the original transparencies to me. Other photographs were supplied by the U.S. National Archives—I scanned around 40,000 prints from its magnificent collection of glass plates taken by Heinrich Hoffmann's cameramen—and by Leif Rosas, Annette Castendyk (daughter of Goebbels' first great love Anka Stalherm's), and Irene Prange, who also entrusted to me Goebbels' early correspondence with Anka. Among those whom I was fortunate to interview were Hitler's secretary Christa Schroeder, his adjutants Nicolaus von Below, Gerhard Engel, Karl-Jesco von Puttkamer, his press staff officials Helmut Sündermann and Heinz Lorenz, his minister of munitions Albert Speer, and Goebbels' senior aide Immanuel Schäffer, all of whom have since died, as well as Traudl Junge, Otto Günsche, both of Hitler's staff, Gunter d'Alquèn, the leading S.S. journalist attached to the propaganda ministry, film director Leni Riefenstahl—who privately showed me her productions of the era—and film star Lida Baarova (now Lida Lundwall). I am grateful to Thomas Harlan for talking to me about his mother the late film star Hilde Körber, and to Ribbentrop's secretary Reinhard Spitzzy and Admiral Raeder's adjutant the late Captain Herbert Friedrichs for anecdotes about Joseph and Magda Goebbels.

Gerta von Radinger (widow of Hitler's personal adjutant Alwin Broder Albrecht), reminisced with me and provided copies of Albrecht's letters to her, and of her correspondence with Magda. Richard Tedor provided to me copies of rare volumes of Goebbels' articles and speeches. Dr K Frank Korf gave me supplemental information about his own papers in Hoover Library. Fritz Tobias supplied important papers from his archives about the Reichstag fire and trial, and notes on his interviews with witnesses who have since died. Israeli researcher Doron Arazi gave me several useful leads on material in German archives. Ulrich Schlie pointed out to me to key Goebbels papers on foreign policy buried in the German foreign ministry archives. Dr Helge Knudsen corresponded with me in 1975 about the authenticity (or otherwise) of Rudolf Semler's 'diary', whose publication he prepared in 1947. I corresponded *inter alia* with Willi Krämer, Goebbels' deputy in the Reichspropagandaleitung; Günter Kaufmann, chief of the Reichspropagandaamt (RPA, Reich Propaganda Agency) in Vienna; and Wilhelm Ohlenbusch, who directed propaganda in occupied Poland. Wolf Rüdiger Hess and his mother Ilse Hess gave me exclusive access to the private papers of his late father, Rudolf Hess, in Hindelang including correspondence with Goebbels. The late Dr Hans-Otto Meissner discussed with me Ello Quandt and other members of Goebbels' entourage, whom he interviewed for his 1950s biography of Magda Goebbels. Peter Hoffmann, William Kingsford professor of history at McGill University in Montreal, reviewed my chapter on 'Valkyrie', as did Lady Diana Mosley those pages relating to her own meetings with Goebbels in the Thirties; Robin Denniston, to whom I owe so much for twenty years, read through the whole manuscript, offered suggestions and advised me to temper criticism with charity more often than I had.

DAVID IRVING

LONDON 1994

Prologue: The Mark of Cain

ARE man's intellectual misfortunes visited upon him before birth, like some ineradicable mark of Cain, or is he born free of all attributes?

Some basic instincts are inherent, buried deep within the cerebral lobes. That much is clear. Xenophobia; the urge to mate; the instincts to survive and kill, these are as much part of the human mechanism as the escapement is part of the clock. But how is it with the more subtle qualities which, we hope, distinguish man from the lower orders—his powers to persuade and lead, to cheat and deceive? In short, does the infant come upon Earth unable to avoid the destiny already implanted in the neurons of his brain? Is it a genetic lottery? Here, a minute virus ordains that this man shall compose nine symphonies; there, an excess of dopamine will have him hearing the devil's whispered commands for the remainder of an adult life that may well be curtailed by the hangman's rope.

Every man has some say in his own fortunes. The tangle of nerves and ganglia is not just a rack which passively stores data and impressions. It is open to each brain's owner to work upon it, to devise by intellectual training the swiftest path between it and the muscles and voice over which it is to be master.

From the convolutions in the brain's left frontal lobe springs forth the voice that commands other men to hate, to march, to dance, to die. Moreover, man can *condition* this controlling instrument. Man is what he eats, that is true. But his brain is more than that—it is what he has seen about him too. The operas, the great works of art and poetry, the ill-defined sensations of national pride and humiliation, all these impressions are encoded and stored away by the neurons of the brain. And thus gradually one man comes to differ from the next.

Since prehistoric times the human brain has remained impenetrable and marvelous. Surgeons have trepanned into the human cranium in the hope of fathoming its

secrets. The Greeks, the Romans, and the mediæval Arabs all opened up their fellow humans' skulls to gaze upon the brain. In 1945 the American army took Benito Mussolini's brain away for examination; they did the same with Dr. Robert Ley's brain, and the Russians with Lenin's. But no instrument has yet explained the brain's capacity for evil.

THE BRAIN which indirectly occupies us now has ceased its machinations one evening in May 1945. Here it is, punctured by a 6·35-caliber bullet, lying in the ruined garden of a government building in Berlin. Next to its owner are the charred remains of a woman, the metal fastenings tumbling out of her singed, once-blonde hair. Around them both, callously grouped for the photographer, stand a Russian lieutenant-colonel, two majors, and several civilians.

It is May 2, 1945: five P.M., and the building is the late Adolf Hitler's Reich Chancellery. The lieutenant-colonel is Ivan Isiaevich Klimenko, head of Smersh (a Russian acronym for Soviet Counter-Intelligence) in a Rifle Corps. He has been led here by the Chancellery's cook Wilhelm Lange and its garage manager Karl Schneider. It has begun to pour with rain. Klimenko's men slide the two bodies onto a large red-and-gilt door torn from the building. They scoop up a fire-blackened Walther pistol found beneath the man's body, and another pistol found nearby; a gold badge; an engraved gold cigarette case, and other personal effects. All will be needed for identification.¹

Driving a Jeep, Klimenko leads the way back to Smersh headquarters set up in the old jailhouse at Plötzensee. On the following day he returns to the Chancellery, still hunting for the Führer. Below ground, inside the bunker, he finds the bodies of six children in pretty blue nightdresses or pyjamas. He ships them out to Plötzensee too, together with the corpse of a burly German army officer, a suicide.

The Russians bring all the guests of the five-star Continental Hotel out to Plötzensee, including a textiles merchant, a chaplain, and a hospital assistant, and invite them to identify the cadavers.² Even if the receding hairline, the Latin profile, the overwide mouth, and the unusually large cranium are not clues enough, then the steel splint with its two ringlike clamps to clutch the calf muscles, and the charred leather straps

still tying it to the right leg leave no room for doubt at all. The foot is clenched like a dead chicken's claw: a club foot.

This is all that remains of Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the malevolent genius whose oratory once inspired a nation to fight a total war and to hold out to the very end.

The Germans carry all the bodies outside on tarpaulins, and a Red Army truck transports them to a villa some ten kilometres north-north-east of Berlin where the Soviets are equipped to perform autopsies.

Soviet officers bring in Professor Werner Haase, one of Hitler's surgeons, and Fritzsche, one of Goebbels' senior deputies, to view the bodies.³

Haase identifies them; Fritzsche hesitates, but the club foot and the orthopaedic shoe clinch it for him. 'Check the Gold Party Badge,' he suggests.

The badge is cleaned of soot and dirt, and reveals the number 8762—Goebbels' membership number in the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi party).

'It's Dr. Goebbels,' Fritzsche confirms.⁴

This is almost the last public appearance of Dr. Joseph Goebbels. A few days later the Russians summon Hans Fritzsche out to G.P.U. (secret police) headquarters at Friedrichshagen, in south-east Berlin and show him a notebook partly concealed by a metal plate: he recognizes Goebbels' handwriting, and asks to see more. The Soviet officer removes the plate and reveals a diary bound in red leather. 'We found twenty of these, up to about 1941, in the vaults of the Reichsbank,' he says.

The Russians arrange one final identification ceremony. In a copse near Friedrichshagen that Whitsun of 1945 they show Goebbels' entire family, now resting in wooden coffins, to his former personal detective, the forty year old *Feldpolizei* officer Eckold. He identifies his former master without hesitation.⁵

AMONG the personal effects was a gold cigarette case inscribed 'Adolf Hitler,' and dated '29.x.34'. That was Paul Joseph Goebbels' birthday. He had first opened his eyes and uttered his first scream at No.186 Odenkirchener Strasse in the smoky Lower Rhineland town of Rheydt on October 29, 1897;⁶ it was a thousand-year old textiles centre, set in a landscape of traditionally pious Catholics and hardworking

country folk. 'The daily visit to church,' writes Ralf Georg Reuth, Goebbels' most recent biographer, 'confession and family prayers at home and their mother making the sign of the cross on her kneeling children's foreheads with holy water, were as much a part of their life as the daily bread for which their father toiled at Lennartz' gas-mantle factory.'⁷ Their father Fritz Göbbels—that is the spelling in Paul Joseph's birth certificate—was W. H. Lennartz & Co's dependable, Catholic though certainly not bigoted bookkeeper.⁸ It is not over fanciful to suspect that he chose the child's second name in honour of Dr Josef Joseph, a revered local Jewish attorney and close family friend; the child had often been sent round to talk literature with this neighbour.⁹ Fritz persevered with the Lennartz company almost until he died, struggling, through thrift and application, to provide a better life for his family than he had known himself.

He himself had been born here to a tailor's family from Beckrath south-west of Rheydt. He had the same bulbous nose as his father Conrad Göbbels¹⁰ and as his brother Heinrich, a paunchy commercial traveller in textiles with all the ready wit that Fritz so sorely lacked. Fritz's mother Gertrud was a peasant's daughter. From first to last his relations with his youngest son Joseph were strained. Aware that his own career would see little more advancement, he made sacrifices for 'little Jupp' (Jüppche), which were most inadequately repaid. He struggled painfully for promotion in the firm from errand boy to clerk, then to bookkeeper with a starched collar, and finally director in the obligatory stovepipe hat. As his father's life drew to its close years later, Joseph would see in him only a 'petty minded, grubby, beer swilling pedant, concerned only with his pathetic bourgeois existence and bereft of any imagination.'¹¹ Among his effects were found blue cardboard account books in which he had detailed every penny he had spent since marriage.¹² Conceding grudgingly that his father would in all likelihood go to Heaven, Joseph would write: 'I just can't understand why Mother married the old miser.'¹³ He painted a picture of his father lying in bed three-quarters of the day, then reading papers, drinking beer, smoking and cursing his wife, who had already been about her housework since six A.M. His

sympathies were all with her. 'I owe her all that I am,' he once wrote; and he remained beholden to her all his life.¹⁴

He had his mother's astute features—the face perceptibly flattened at each side, the nose slightly hooked, the upper front teeth protruding. She had been born Katharina Maria Odenhausen in the village of Uebach-over-Worms in Holland, and occasionally she lapsed into Rhenish Plattdeutsch¹⁵ when speaking with Joseph.¹⁶ Her father was a muscular Dutch blacksmith with a long beard, a man Joseph would look back upon as the dearest of his ancestors. He died in the Alexianer monastery at Mönchen-Gladbach of apoplexy. Her mother had then moved into Germany to serve as housekeeper to a distant relative, a local rector at Rheindahlen; she had spent her youth there with all her brothers and sisters except for Joseph Odenbach, Goebbels's architect godfather, who had stayed at Uebach. It was at Rheindahlen that Katharina had met Fritz Göbbels and married him in 1892.

So much for Goebbels' parents. Two sons had arrived before him, Konrad¹⁷ and Hans.¹⁸ Three sisters followed him: two, Maria and Elisabeth, died young, a third, also christened Maria, was born twelve years after Joseph. We shall occasionally glimpse Konrad and Hans, struggling through the depression until Joseph's rise to power from which they too profited, being appointed to head Nazi publishing houses and insurance associations respectively. Maria remained the apple of his eye.¹⁹

Through living frugally, and thanks to a pay rise to 2,100 marks per annum, in 1900 his father was able to purchase outright a modest house at No. 140 Dahleener Strasse in Rheydt (still standing today as No. 156).²⁰ There was no front garden; its two bare windows beside the front door still overlook a monumental mason's yard. Young Joseph had his room under the sloping roof, his mansard window's view limited to the skies above. This remained 'home' for him, the fulcrum of his life, long after he left it as a young man.

He remembered his sickly earliest years only dimly. He recalled playing with friends called Hans, Willy²¹, Otto (whom he knew as 'Öttche') and the Maassen brothers, and a bout of pneumonia which he only barely survived. He was always a little mite of a fellow. Even in full manhood he would weigh less than one hundred pounds.

At age six his mother placed him in the primary school (*Volksschule*) right next to the house. Bathing little Joseph his mother often found the weals on his back caused by one particularly sadistic teacher's cane. Goebbels was a stubborn and conceited boy. Fifteen or twenty years later he would reveal, in an intimate handwritten note, how his mental turmoil both delighted and tormented him. 'Earlier,' he wrote, 'when Saturday came and the afternoon yawned ahead of me, there was no restraining me. The whole of the past week with all its childish horrors weighed down upon my soul. I seized my prayer book and betook myself to church; and I contemplated all the good and the bad that the week had brought me, and then I went to the priest and confessed everything that was troubling my soul.'²²

HIS right leg had always hurt. When he was about seven, a medical disaster befell him which would change his life. 'I see before me,' he would reminisce, 'a Sunday walk—we all went over to Geistenbeck. The next day, on the sofa, I had an attack of my old foot pains. Mother was at the washtub. Screams. I was in agony. The masseur, Mr. Schiering. Prolonged treatment. Crippled for rest of my life. Examined at Bonn university clinic. Much shrugging of shoulders. My youth from then on,' Goebbels mused piteously, 'somewhat joyless.'

In adulthood his right foot was 18 centimetres long—3.5 centimetres shorter than the left; its heel was drawn up and the sole looked inwards (*equino-varus*). The right leg was correspondingly shorter than the left, and thinner. The indications are that Goebbels' defect was not genetic but acquired as the result of some disease.²³ It defied all attempts at surgical remedy; had the deformation occurred at birth, when the bones are soft, it would have been relatively easy to manipulate them back into the right alignment. Perhaps he acquired it from osteomyelitis (a bone marrow inflammation) or from infantile paralysis. He would hint, at age thirty, that the deformity developed from an accident at age thirteen or fourteen.²⁴

This schoolboy with a large, intelligent cranium, a puny, underdeveloped body and a club foot lived out his childhood to a chorus of catcalls, jeers and ridicule. It was, he later accepted, 'one of the seminal episodes of my childhood... I became lonely

and eccentric. Perhaps this was why I was everybody's darling at home.'²⁵ He learned how cruel children could be. 'I could say a thing or two about that,' he would sigh in his diary, aged twenty-six.²⁶ Each creature, he now saw, had to struggle for survival in its own way.

When he was ten they operated on his deformed foot. He later recalled the family visiting him one Sunday in the hospital; he flooded with tears as his mother left, and passed an unforgettably grim half hour before the anaesthetic. The operation left the pain and deformity worse than before. But his Aunt Christine brought him some fairy tales to read, and thus he discovered in reading a world of silent friends that could not taunt or ridicule.

When he returned to his mansard room he began to devour every book and encyclopedia that he could lay his hands on.

He would show them: the brain, if properly prepared and used, could outwit the brawniest physique.

¹ Soviet documents on the identification of the cadavers of Goebbels and his family were published by Lev Bezymenski in *Der Tod von Adolf Hitler* (Munich, Berlin, 1982), 48ff and 97ff; Soviet surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel Grachow established the children's cause of death as 'toxic carbohaemoglobin,' and makes no mention of bullet wounds in Joseph or Magda Goebbels; but for political reasons the KGB also suppressed references to the bullet entry in Hitler's head.

² Testimony of Paul Schmidt at Amtsgericht Berlin-Zehlendorf, Oct 21, 1955 (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich [hereafter IfZ]: F82, Heiber papers); William Henning in *Hamburger Freie Presse*, Nov 5, 1947.

³ Testimony of Fritzsche, Apr 30, 1947 (Hoover Libr.: K Frank Korf papers).

⁴ On May 5 the British ambassador in Moscow was told that the bodies of Goebbels and family (but not of Hitler) had been found. 'The cause of death was poison.' (Tel. 1738 to Foreign Office London [cit hereafter as FO], May 6. Public Record Office [PRO] file FO.371/46748); also Krasnaya Zvezda, Moscow, and United Press despatch in *New York Times* [cit. as *NYT*], May 18, 1945.

⁵ Former Kommissar of Geheime Feldpolizei Wilhelm Eckold, quoted in 'Zehn ehemalige Generale zurückgekehrt,' in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [cited as *FAZ*], Jan 9, 1956; he was Goebbels' personal detective 1934-38, 1942-45.

⁶ Today it is numbered 202 Odenkirchener Strasse.